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Words 907

At 8:53 am in driving rain the Patriot Guard Riders began their slow roar of their motorcycles as they entered Riverside National Cemetery (RNC) carrying the ceremonial wreaths along with three gold star mothers, in a truck, to deliver the ceremonial wreaths to the RNC Amphitheater for the Wreaths Across America and Civil Air Patrol's (CAP) fourth annual Ceremony honoring our veterans who are buried in the National Cemetery, considered to be the Arlington of the West Coast.

About 250 guests and speakers representing RNC, the US Congress, the US Senate, CAP and all branches of the military services gathered on Saturday, December 12, to participate in the fourth annual Wreaths Across America ceremony and the placing of holiday wreaths on gravesites. In spite of a driving rain and cold temperatures many people sacrificed their morning to honor our fallen hero's.

The Patriot Guard motorcycles roared up to the back of the amphitheater and veterans from all branches of the service lined up to bring in the ceremonial wreaths to be handed over to seven uniformed retired and active duty service representatives from the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard, Merchant Marines and a former MIA-POW who served during the Vietnam War, was captured and held until released in 1973.

Among those dignitaries in attendance there was California State Assemblyman, Chuck Devore, retired Lt Col Army Reserve, the keynote speaker, who later said, " We came here today to remember our brothers and sisters and fathers and mothers, our fallen hero's who sacrificed their lives to protect our country and gave all they had." Devore who served 24 years in the US Army Reserves, his awards include the Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendation with bronze oak leaf cluster, National Defense Medal and others, was there to help us remember

the fallen and to teach our children about sacrifice and freedom. He spoke from the heart without notes.

Group 3, Composite Squadron 45, March Air Reserve Base was host squadron along with Brackett Composite Squadron 64 and had 64 CAP members responded and attended the ceremony. Among them were Lt Col Charles Wiese, California Wing representative, Lt Col John Finley, Group 3 Commander, Squadron 45 Commander Maj Dave Goude and Squadron 64 Commander Lt Col Ken Hartwell.

At exactly 0900 Pacific Standard Time CH (Lt Col) Mike McKinney, from Brackett Squadron 64, asked all in attendance, "join with me in a minute of silence to remember the fallen, the prisoners of war, the missing in action and honor those who have served and are serving this great nation's armed services."

Other guests whom spoke included, Lt Gen Alan A Baumann (Commander of United States Volunteers-Joint Service Command), Major Kathy Neubauer, (Deputy Commander of Cadets SQ 45), Brittany Shelton, (representing US Senator Barbara Boxer's office) and Dirk Konopik, (Military and Veterans Affairs Specialist for 44th district, US Congressman Ken Calvert's office).

Baumann, a Judge Advocate General, who retired from 30 year in the US Army as a Lt Col said, "it is paramount that we honor each fallen service member as an individual."

Shelton who was there to represent US Senator Barbara Boxer said. "Senator Boxer asked that I extend a special thanks to Riverside National Cemetery and the Civil Air Patrol for holding the Wreaths Across America ceremonies to honor our nation's veterans.

Konopik a Navy submarine veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom said, "I am honored to have the privilege to speak with you all today in the heart of a memorial devoted to the upholding of our great nation's liberties and would like to convey the Congressman's deep regret

for being unable to attend and his appreciation for those holding the ceremony, and more

importantly, for all the servicemen and women that it honors.” He also said, “ These individuals that we honor today are our nation’s warriors, they are those who have gone before and paved the road of freedom and liberty that our citizens now easily walk upon, with their own blood. Today we honor our nation’s heroes. Today we honor those who have served and those who are serving as we speak. And even with the rain what a great day it is. I want to thank the Civil Air Patrol, the Gold Star parents, the Memorial Honor Detail (MHD) Team 45 and Riverside National Cemetery and our service men and women and all of you who support our nation’s heroes.

The most poignant moment of the WAA ceremony at RNC, came when MHD Team-45 fired three rifle volleys, folded a ceremonial flag and presented the folded flag to the parents of Private First Class, PFC, Marcus Allan Tynes, of the 82nd Airborne Division. Tynes was killed in action on November 22, 2009 in Zabul Province, located in Southeast Afghanistan while riding in his Hum-vie by an improvised explosive device, (IED). Tynes dad, Mr. Bruce Atlas, was grateful after the ceremony, and said. “I am grateful to RNC the military and to those who planned and put together the wreath program today. It honors the memory of my son and his sacrifice he has made for his country.”

The flag presented by Command Sergeant Major (CSM) Jessie Ramil, who during his tour in Vietnam served with the 82nd Airborne Division, went to remind all those in attendance that service to their country is passed on to each generation, said Jim Ruester, Public Affair Director of RNC.